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AUTHOR	Oliver, Helen T.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an innovative service learning program developed at Rust College in Holly Springs, Mississippi, a historically black college in a poor rural area. Project DREAMS (Developing Responsibility through Education, Affirmation, Mentoring, and Service) involves college student volunteers serving as tutors and mentors to elementary school students in two local school districts. In the inaugural year, the primary function of the program was to market and define service learning, to identify and provide technical assistance to faculty, and to assure academic integrity. The program then began to implement service learning across the curriculum and build service learning community partnerships. During the Spring 1997 semester 57 Rust College volunteers participated in service learning programs impacting upward of 500 K-4 students. Student volunteers are required to attend an initial orientation and training session, complete an application form, submit a letter of recommendation from a professor, sign a 20-hour service contract, keep a journal of service activities, complete assigned readings, write a reflective paper on the service experience, and make a classroom presentation on the experience. So far, 34 percent of the faculty have integrated a service learning component into their courses. (Contains 13 references.) (MDM)

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TAKING ACTION IN RURAL MISSISSIPPI: UNITING ACADEMIC STUDIES AND COMMUNITY SERVICE THROUGH PROJECT D.R.E.A.M.S.

Helen T. Oliver, Ph.D.
Service-Learning Director and Associate Professor of Education
Rust College, Holly Springs, Mississippi

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an innovative service-learning program at Rust College an African-American College in northeast Mississippi that was funded by the Corporation for National Service (CNS) in 1995. An overview is given of this campus wide curriculum integration model that connects student volunteers to community needs. Highlighted are the planning processes, the design structure, the vision and mission of the project, an example of a changed syllabus, an outline of the reflective paper, journal entry form, and student volunteer requirements. Also discussed are the results of an attitudinal survey administered to the faculty and the current state of the program.

INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi once said: *"It's the action, not the fruit of the action, that's important....you have to do the right thing...it may not be in your power, may not be in your time, that there'll be any fruit, but that doesn't mean you stop doing the right thing. You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there'll be no result."*

This is a story of how a small liberal arts college located in the rural county of Marshall in Holly Springs, Mississippi-- some 45 miles south of Memphis Tennessee-- is taking action to solve pressing community problems; low academically achieving students and human needs.

Contextual Problems

In 1995, I was charged by the Dean to write a proposal to implement a service-learning program at Rust College. This was a collaborative effort of colleagues who came together to brainstorm on how to best tackle the critical problems in the local community. Realizing that poverty and illiteracy were critical problems in the community we decided to meet these challenges head on. Prompted by research on rural poverty in America (Duncan, 1992; Harrington, 1962) and translated to local conditions, we began to document problems that would alienate people and cause the deterioration of communities.

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1995), Mississippi has the highest percentage of illiteracy in the nation and ranks 47th in the nation for having a high school educated workforce (51 percent). Only 35 percent of those 25 years or older are high school graduates. Studies over the last 20 years show that children of illiterate parents are more likely to be illiterate themselves. More than one-fourth of the families have female heads of household. The per capita income of $7,600 and the median household income of $18,500 is well below the national average (1990 Census). About 30 percent of the county's population is below the poverty level. Additional disabling conditions include; serious housing problems, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, increased crime rates, school suspensions and dropouts, and the absence of community activities to redirect the energy of 'idle' youth. The community is predominantly black and poor with two viable economic entities--Rust College and the privately owned correctional facility.

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Moreover, the Holly Springs school district has been designated "at-risk" by the Mississippi State Department of Education and faces probation because of continued low achievement test scores (Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal, January 14, 1996). Community perception of the District is low. Respondents of a recent strategic assessment (Spalding & Associates, 1997) indicate that the community perceives the school district as "antiquated," "lacking in resources," "having a low educational level," is "without a clearly defined mission," "employing teachers with minimal exposure," and simply "very bad," "not good" and "not safe." Furthermore, there are conflicting perception of the school district by blacks and whites. Respondents gave answers such as "two cultures." While the black community see it as a central part of their lives," "the white community does not want anything to do with it..." and "whites see it as a black school system that is not very good and really don't want any information about it." Consequently, we needed to develop an innovative program that would address these serious local problems in education and human needs. With funding from the Corporation for National Service (CNS), **Project D.R.E.A.M.S.** was born.

PROJECT D.R.E.A.M.S.

Core Beliefs

In developing our model, we attempted to clarify a set of core beliefs about effective education and human potential. Project DREAMS is premised on the notion that life-long attitudes take root during the earliest part of life and seeks to help the educational achievement of children from kindergarten to fourth grade by developing responsibility through education, affirmation, mentoring and service - hence the acronym **DREAMS**. We chose this group of students because we believe that we could influence their lives by shaping and moulding their attitudes toward school achievement. We firmly believe that children are the greatest resource and investment of any community. We further believe that all children can learn and possess the right and the desire to be successful. Parental involvement in the educational process is crucial to this success as children look to adults for direction and supervision. Rust College was poised to cater to these beliefs.

THE VISION

Planning to Impact Elementary School Students - maximizing potential

We envisioned providing elementary students with academic training in basic subjects -- reading, writing, mathematics --planned conveniently around their daily academic routine and in after school programs. We also felt it necessary to provide mentoring services for personal development and responsibility skills; learning activities in which to study their history and culture that would affirm their worth and dignity, and learning activities that teach and reinforce motivational skills needed to develop healthy self-concepts. We felt that we would need to engage them in problem solving activities that would enable them to face life-defining choices concerning peer pressure, drug abuse, crime awareness, and social responsibility. We wanted them ultimately to enjoy learning for its own sake, to love and respect themselves and others, and to exhibit the confidence and the desire to serve others, by developing service projects of their own which would involve family members and teachers. Ultimately, this vision would see these students grow into productive adult citizens who would in turn cater to the needs of the community in a leadership capacity.

Planning to Impact College Volunteers - the gift of self

For the volunteers, we wanted them to take a journey of awakening and discovery. This journey would begin with a commitment to serve, with an awareness of human needs, and with the willingness to identify with others. This awareness would evoke an understanding that individuals can impact the environment by connecting with, and contributing to, the welfare of another person. Community problems would be recognized and the individual would develop a sense of being capable of responding to such needs. Furthermore, the individual will recognize that by responding, a significant difference will be derived for both provider and receiver of service. These we believe are the roots of service and the beginning of leadership.

Planning to Impact the Institution --the tower of hope

Rust College is an historically black college supported by the United Methodist Church. Student population is under 1000 with females outnumbering males two to one. Most of the students come from Mississippi and neighboring states with others from nine foreign countries. The faculty is a mixture of diverse ethnicity and cultural backgrounds. About 50 percent of the faculty hold doctorates and there is a strong international scholarship present.

As an institution of higher learning and a vital educational and economic entity in the community, we wanted to revitalize the college through a shared mission and vision of service. We saw it as a central hub of organized service activities through an established center for service learning -- a place where faculty, staff, students and administrators are actively engaged in service to the community. We saw everyone engaged with a sense of urgency, in fundraising activities to sustain service operations. We wanted the college to have its own "DREAMS Transit Line" for transporting volunteers to and from the service sites. Moreover, we wanted the college to value the ethic of service somuchso that it would offer academic credit for service; that this would be recorded on student's transcript; that professors would integrate service-learning in every course, that the college would provide fellowships and scholarships to faculty and students respectively for service delivery, and would celebrate the ethic of service annually. Thus, the college would improve through student satisfaction, retention and recruitment.

Planning to Impact the Community--catering to children's needs

For the community, we wanted to improve college-community relations by encouraging interracial and intercultural cooperation around the issue of children's needs. We believe that children are the greatest resource of the community and should be our greatest investment. We wanted to provide human and other resources to the community to help solve the pressing problems of low school achievement.

MISSION

We were charged by the mission to tutor and mentor elementary students **(K-4)** in two local school districts so that students might thrive academically, personally and socially.

CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION

Implementing Project D.R.E.A.M.S.

Project DREAMS became a comprehensive curriculum integration project to address the local needs described above. We revisited the college's mission statement and identified with the threefold mission of teaching, research and community service. We capitalized on the college's motto: "by their fruits ye

shall know them" recognizing that the desired product would be students who are prepared academically with a sense of civic responsibility. Rust College has had a rich tradition of implementing change through community service. It recognizes the importance of establishing and maintaining fundamental linkages with the community, particularly if empowerment and change are going to occur in addressing the educational, social and economic issues facing the community. However, to stay current with new social trends, some basic structural changes were required to bridge the gap between the institution and the community.

The Design - A Comprehensive College Plan

The integration of service-learning into the curriculum required a change from conventional learning processes to include experiential learning. Service-learning blends passive and active learning and takes place at two addresses - the classroom and the community. The classroom is the academic site where learning takes place and where professors are the "guardians" and "executors" of the curriculum. The community is the non-academic site where other activities occur. But both are learning sites.

Implementation of a comprehensive college plan began with an examination of the mission statement and how to make it a realistic and active document. We identified service as an important function that could be built into the curriculum through freshman studies, general education, individual course requirements and validated through the service-learning center, course syllabi, seminars, faculty development and student evaluation forms **(Exhibit 1)**.

Exhibit 1 **Comprehensive College Plan**
Mission Statement **Teaching***Research***Service** **built into the** **Curriculum** **through** **Freshman Studies** **General Education** **Individual course requirement** **validated through** **Community Service Center/Coordinator** **Course Syllabi** **Seminars** **Faculty Development Forms** **Student Evaluation Forms**

Action Plan

The action plan includes three phases--planning, implementation and sustainability. In the inaugural year, the primary function of the program was to market and define service-learning, identify and provide technical assistance to faculty, and to assure academic integrity. We decided that we could best integrate

service-learning into the college-wide curriculum by establishing and supporting mini-grant projects. This enabled us to identify faculty members willing and able to incorporate the strategy into their curricula. This was first accomplished by speaking to a general assembly of faculty at the invitation of the dean which communicated institutional support for the initiative. Formal presentations were on-going in several academic divisions. Other activities to promote service-learning included building relationships among the faculty, curriculum revision, faculty training, needs assessment, creating and dissemination of materials, establishing a service network, and curriculum coordination. Six revised courses were implemented across disciplines and program evaluation tools were constructed or adapted for use. Volunteer placement was on-going. Phase three was targeted for a video production entitled: "DREAMS in Rural Mississippi: How to Turn Things Around" and strategies for program sustainability and participant recognition **(Exhibit 2)**.

Exhibit 2 **Action Plan**	
Phase 1: Planning, Implementation, Activities.	Focus on relationship building, training curriculum revision and volunteer recruitment.
Phase 2: Operations	Implementing service-learning curriculum components, producing a documentary, and writing manuals and information dissemination.
Phase 3: Sustaining Project DREAMS	Holding summer youth programs, field trips, proposal writing, writing an operations manual, volunteer awards banquet and fundraising.

Building and Sustaining Community Partnerships

One challenge was to redefine the relationship with the community and to build partnerships. Once plans were determined, the questions emerged: "were we prepared to go the extra mile to accomplish our goals. Were we ready to implement significant institutional change to make the partnerships work? Was the commitment throughout the ranks or limited to the program director. Was the institution committed to engaging in difficult dialogue?" Although answers to these questions are continuing challenges, since 1995, ten community partnerships have been developed **(Exhibit 3)**.

Exhibit 3 **Service-Learning Community Partnerships**	
County School District	City School District
Literacy Council	ICS Headstart
After-School Program	Extended Day Program
Jr. Achievement	Alternative School Program
Drug Awareness Program	Campus-Link AmeriCorps Program (State)

Furthermore, we understand that "partnership" means a two-way commitment, not an asymmetrical relationship where only "those" at the college have the expertise, know what the community needs and are prepared to serve them based on those assumptions. Our partnership is collaboratively based on mutual respect. Education takes place in the community and the classroom. "Expertise" becomes a resource - the college to the community, and the community comes to the college and becomes the expert in the classroom. Therefore, nurturing partnerships involve utilizing all expertise in the relationship.

Student Volunteer Requirements

During the Spring 1997 semester, 57 Rust College volunteers participated in the service-learning program impacting upward of 500 kindergarten to fourth-grade students. Based upon the requirements established by the Service-Learning Center, instructors are required to integrate service-according to the guidelines outlined in **Exhibit 4.**

Exhibit 4
Student Volunteer Requirements

SERVICE OPTION (Course Name):

ORGANIZATIONAL PLACEMENT:

Student Volunteers are required to:

1. Attend the initial orientation/training session.
2. Complete an application form and return to the Service-Learning Office - Room 108 of McMillan Multi-Purpose Building.
3. Submit one letter of recommendation from a professor.
4. Complete a confidentiality, ethical issues, liability and insurance contract.
5. Sign a contract of service agreeing to 20 hours of service at a local organization.
6. Keep a journal of activities carried out "in service."
7. Complete the assigned related readings.
8. Write a reflective paper on the service experience.
9. Make a classroom presentation of the service experience.

GRADING OF THE SERVICE-LEARNING REQUIREMENT

30 points are earned in the following way:

- 18 " on-site participation (60% of grade).
- 6 " final, reflective paper (20% of grade).
- 1.5 " daily journal of the experience (5% of grade).
- 3 " classroom presentation (10% of grade).
- 1.5 " required readings (5% of grade)--Barber & Battistoni (1993). Education for Democracy.

Community organizations will be required to give the student upon completion of the service:

---a letter of recommendation to strengthen the student's resume'

---a recommendation (where appropriate) for a Service Excellence Award.

PLACEMENT: Students will be placed at the organizational site each Wednesday (flex-day). They are required to do at least 2-hours of service on each occasion. The paper and presentation will be due at the end of the module.

Teaching Styles

Professors have various motivations that compel them to participate in the service-learning program and to transform the courses they teach by broadening course work . They must embrace the concept of service-learning and modify their teaching approach accordingly. Course work must be broadened beyond the requirement of reading and discussing the required texts, writing papers, and examinations. Instructors adapt to a style that promotes active learning among students, provide opportunities to learn from other students and from the community. Faculty must become an advocate for community service and make service-learning an integral component of individual courses by broadening the base for learning beyond the confines of the academic setting (Beckham, 1996).

Preliminary guidelines were developed for relating service-learning to instruction at Rust College (McKinney, 1995). Faculty must:

1) integrate service-learning experiences into student's individualized program of instruction;
2) design and identify specific service learning skills, opportunities, and assignments to make the experience special for each student;
3) carefully identify and select students for specific service-learning assignments;
4) structure imaginatively service-learning opportunities and assignments for optimum personal growth and professional skills development of each student and
5) provide creative measures for evaluation of student experience and performance involving detailed written assessment of personal strengths and performance skills of each student.

Recent educational literature published by the American Sociology Association's professional journal, *Teaching Sociology* has noted the learning benefits of linking college campuses to the community (Pestello et al. 1996). Sociology professors at Rust College has indicated that "sociological concepts come alive when they are complemented by firsthand experiences and guided reflections." What really happens when one integrates service opportunities into classroom instruction? Several important classroom learning improvements are evident through service-learning (The National Youth Leadership Council):

- builds critical thinking skills
- enhances academic performance
- fosters engaged learning
- promotes active citizenship
- improves self-esteem and self-concept
- develops a service consciousness and ethic
- teaches leadership skills
- increases a sense of social responsibility, and
- provides career exploration and insight

Exhibit 5 is an example of how a sociology professor has transformed a course in Introduction to Sociology to include service-learning. According to Balazadeh (1997) the involvement of sociology students in the local community is likely to enhance a student's understanding of sociological concepts, and the impact of structure on people's lives. A central goal of undergraduate instruction in the sociology discipline is to get students to think like a sociologist; a necessary ability for success in graduate school and an asset for all forms of public service.

Changing the course syllabus: Introduction to Sociology

Exhibit 5
Syllabus

Institution:_____
Division of: _____
Course **Title: Introduction to Sociology**
Course Prefix and #:_____
Period and Year: **Spring 1997**

Name of Professor:_____
Office:_____
Telephone:_____
Office Hours:_____

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: to convey an understanding of the sociological perspective and ways to apply this perspective to everyday life. The focus is on the interplay between the individual and the social environment. The following topics are important: social structure, culture, socialization, social inequalities, deviance, social institutions, and social change.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Students are expected to select one of two options *no later than the second week.* The options are as follows:

OPTION R (regular)		**OPTION S (service-learning)**	
2 Exams	**50 points**	**2 Exams**	**50 points**
5 Assignments	**25 points**	**2 Take-Home Essays**	**10 points**
Final	**25 points**	**1 Assignment**	**5 points**
		Take-Home Final	**5 points**
		Service-Learning	**30 points**
	==========		=========
	100 points		**100 points**
GRADING SCALE: A total of 100 points can be earned in this class. Grading is as follows: **A (90%) 90 and above; B (80%) 80-89; C (70%) 70-79; D (60%) 60-69; F (59%) 59 and below.**		**TEXT: William C. NesSmith (1995). Thinking Sociologically.**	

Journaling and reflection are essential components of the service-learning experience. Students are required to keep a daily journal and write a reflective paper which is presented to the class at completion of the service contract. An example of the journal entry form and reflective paper outline given to students are displayed in **Exhibit 6** and **Exhibit 7** respectively.

Each volunteer presents unique perspectives on the services and outcomes. Reflection as a group provides participants with an opportunity to learn from others, share their perspectives, influence others and seek validation in the process. Service-learning strategies recognize that students retain 60 percent of what

they do, 80 percent of what they do with active guided reflection, and 90 percent of what they teach or give to others.

Exhibit 6
Journal Entry

Place: **Date:** **Time:**

Your Title:

Your Duties: _____

_____

_____

Description of Experiences:

Activities: _____

_____

_____

_____

Identify a Challenge: _____

_____

_____

Identify a Success: _____

_____

_____

Learning theorists point to the conclusion that practical experience followed by reflection are necessary components in a complete cycle of learning. In a complex society, it becomes impossible to determine what information will be necessary to solve particular problems. The content students learning in class is obsolete by the time they finish their degree. Consequently, it seems more important to "light the fire than to fill the bucket."

Service-learning, by its very nature of giving students real-life, meaningful experiences, excites critical thinking. Students encounter events that conflict with their assumptions which is often the beginning of learning. The reflective paper is a tool to facilitate this process and for allowing volunteers to be more inductive in their thinking. This ultimately leads to heightened conceptual or theoretical understanding.

Exhibit 7
Service-Learning Experience
Reflective Paper Outline

Use the following outline to write your reflective paper.

Service Organization or Program
Write a brief sketch of the organization's or program's local history. Identify its goals and mission (the impact it intends to have on campus life and/or on the larger community). Comment on your perception of its strengths and weaknesses at the onset of your experience.

Describe the organization's or program's structure and your volunteer role's relationship to other roles in the organization or program. Describe how this organization or program deals with the issues of need and services provided. Describe the service work that you observed.

Learning Objectives
Describe the challenges, successes, and setbacks in your efforts to accomplish each of your initial objectives. Be specific. Identify the specific outcomes for each objective, including any mid-course changes that were necessary in clarifying the objectives. Identify the extent of developmental progress.

Personal Development
Describe the skills you acquired or polished during this experience (people skills and organizational skills). Describe the specific contributions you made (the way the role was different because you were in that role). Identify the extent of your personal growth as a volunteer and as a leader.

Identify your reasons for wanting to have this volunteer role in the organization as well as previous experiences that prepared you for this role. Identify relevant readings, seminars, or course work which provided you an understanding of your role as a volunteer for the organization or program you served.

Describe your personal philosophy of service (how an effective volunteer works) including any changes that this experience brought to your vision of how service providers and organizations or programs relate to each other. Describe specifically your volunteer skills and the variety of skills that an organization or program needs to be effective.

Evaluation
End your reflection paper with an overall summary of your experience.

A recent participant impact survey indicated that grades for volunteers have improved and the ethic of service is gaining prominence. Consistently upwards of 95 percent rate their experience as excellent or good and would recommend service-learning to their peers and friends. Over 90 percent report that their service enhanced their classroom learning and 92 percent report that the experience has made them more likely to be involved in service in the future.

Exhibit 8
Service-Learning Presentations
Evaluation Guidelines for Participants and Audience

Students should examine the reflective paper outline to prepare for the discussion session on Wednesday. Consider the following questions:

1. In general, what services does the school/agency offer the community? What service needs are provided for students? What about their parents/guardians?

2. What did you expect to learn about tutoring/mentoring K-4 students **BEFORE** you became a volunteer? How do you feel about these early expectations now?

3. What were some of your duties as a volunteer at the school/agency? How do you feel your presence affected the students in grades, discipline, behavior, attendance, study skills, self-image, attitude towards school, homework completion, attitude towards reading, and attitude towards writing?

4. To what extent has participation in volunteer work enhanced your personal growth and development? What is the best part of the tutoring/mentoring program?

6. What is your personal philosophy of service?

7. How do you feel about the effectiveness of the Tutoring program?

Guidelines for All Others:

Students who are actively listening to the classroom discussion, must demonstrate they are actively learning. The instructor is evaluating your active learning in several ways:

1. Students prepare for the discussion by bringing rough notes to class for questions, and they ask questions.

2. Student write a short summary of volunteer discussions. Students conclude their paper by by noting their overall impression of the session, and community needs for volunteer services.

5 OR MORE POINTS ARE ASSIGNED FOR ACTIVE LEARNING!

During the presentation of the reflective papers students report that the service experience had an impact on how they felt about themselves and about their feelings of connection to others and to community. Students were more likely to talk about what they had learned about social issues, about the subject matter of their courses and how their perspective about community problems had changed. Many had developed friendships that lasted beyond the term of service and many students developed innovative programs of their own in the local community. The grading scale for the service-learning component is shown in **Exhibit 9.**

Exhibit 9
Grading for the Service-Learning Requirement

Name: _____ **ID:** _____

30 Points are earned in the following way:

18	on-site participation (60% of grade)
6	final, reflective paper (20% of grade)
1.5	daily journal of the experience (5% of grade)
3	classroom presentation (10% of grade)
1.5	required reading (5% of grade)
---	
30 points	

1. On-SITE PARTICIPATION: _____
2. REFLECTIVE PAPER: _____
3. DAILY JOURNAL: _____
4. CLASSROOM PRESENTATION: _____
5. REQUIRED READING: _____

TOTAL: _____

(Rust College and the Holly Springs Community Thank You!)

In reference to how volunteers have impacted the community a program evaluation indicate that from August 1996 through February 1997, seventy volunteers were involved in service activities expanding the number of volunteers targeted per module. Kindergarten to fourth grade students are being encouraged to stay in school. Recent published reports of achievement test scores for students age five to nine shows an improvement. Seven new community partnerships were formed through service-learning extending the service to 10 sites. The community continues to be appreciative of the services provided by the college as indicated by evaluation reports and by requests for additional and continuing services.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the justification for integrating service-learning at Rust College is its effective contribution to the fulfillment of the institutional mission. The historic mission of the college has been to help students responsibly and intelligently achieve satisfaction in their lives and to promote effective citizenship. The DREAMS project leads to the fulfillment of this goal by effectively and efficiently taking advantage of the reciprocity that exists in the learning partnership between the community and the college. Effective application of the service-learning pedagogy benefits the students, the community and the faculty practitioners.

Today, Faculty and administrative support is spiraling upward and supports the traditional values that higher learning should nurture educated leadership that is committed to using acquired knowledge to help solve the common ailments of rural communities. Five of the six academic divisions have successfully integrated service-learning experiences into students individualized program of instruction. Education and social science disciplines are prominent targets for service-learning. Thirty-four percent of full-time faculty representing each of the six academic divisions have integrated a service-learning component. Seven percent of the Faculty are making scholarly presentations of this new pedagogy and are submitting articles for publication. Ninety-seven percent are interested in learning more about service learning. Fifty-five percent agree that colleagues in their division are willing to integrate service. Eighty-five percent believe that performing volunteer service is beneficial. Seventy-eight percent feel comfortable getting students to volunteer for service activities. While half believe that integrating service-learning would not deter students from their major course of study, the other half agree that students lack of time may prevent them from participating. Sixty-five percent agree that incentives should be offered to faculty for service-learning participation and the majority agree that the college administration supports service-learning. Program leadership has expanded from one half-time faculty coordinator to two full-time program assistants acquired through the Mississippi Commission's Campus Link-AmeriCorps program. Faculty support, training and incentives have increased and faculty grantsmanship has improved. Faculty morale is currently high.

Rust College began with a dream and an action plan; planted the seed of service in an atmosphere of the human condition; nourished by intellectual growth; the desire to make a difference in promoting improvements in the quality of life for local residents; a sense of commitment; and financial support through federal dollars, today the program has taken root and looks good for sustainability beyond the funding cycle. Volunteer enthusiasm is high evidenced by the reciprocating factor of reaching out and touching the lives of others. Faculty and administrative support is spiraling upward and supports the traditional values that higher learning should nurture educated leadership that is committed to using acquired knowledge to help solve the common ailments of rural communities.

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Dr. Helen Oliver is associate professor of Education and Director of Service-Learning at Rust College, Holly Springs, MS. For more information about Project DREAMS you may contact her r at (601) 252-8000 Ext. 4090 or Fax Phone (601) 252-4075; e-mail: holiver684@aol.com